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ABSTRACT

This paper consists cf an essay cn the rcle and problems of ethnographic research in educaticn, as well as an ethnographic case study of a junior high schcol which is experiencing problems of violence and vandalism. The larger study which preceded ethnographic inquiry in 10 schools is described briefly. Reasons for providing only limited preliminary information to ethnographers are related to the objectives of unbiased and ccmplete research. The main purpose of the case studies was to document the inschcol prccesses which contribute to or deter violence and vandalism. This ethnographic descriptien documents the prccesses of decay in "Bayside" junior high school, taking into account student, teacher, administrator and community factors. Ccnclusions center arcund the relationships between school viclence and (1) lack of interest in examining and experimenting with internal processes to deter schocl violence; (2) a student evaluation system which seems to exacerbate problems of truancy and misbehavior; (3) peer pressure not to achieve; and (4) stereotyping of student offenders cn the part cf school personnel. Varicus recommendaticns are cffered for solving the problems of school violence and vandalism. (GC)

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The Ethnographer in the School: An Examination of School Violence and Crime*

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UDO 15330

The Ethnographer in the School: An Examination
of School Violence and Crime

The field of applied anthropology is still somewhat limited by the notion of the anthropologist participating "in a direct culture change program"[1] where a target group, change agents and innovations dominate the researcher's inquiry. These case studies, as part of the larger congressional study, Violent Schools, Safe Schools: Safe School Study Report to Congress instead are placed in the context of investigating a phenomenon, a social issue. In this arena the researcher is participating in (and influencing) public policy. This removal from the culture change process generates a series of challenges which may not be althogether peculiar to other policy studies.

The Question of Biases

The most immediate of these challenges is the sense of urgency created by a so-called "national issue." This type of press upon the sensibilities of the ethnographer may provoke certain biases or predispositions to one side or another of the issue. In these cases it seems imperative that the ethnographer should not have a vested interest in either outcome of the policy nor should the investigator have any occupational links to the segment affected by the phenomenon. Without these precautions the ethnographers may unwittingly find themselves seeking confirmation of their biases.

This particular study being undergrided by a massive bank of survey data also presented opportunities for biases to emerge. Extreme precaution was exercised so as not to expose the ethnographer to previous survey findings. Whereas, many interdisciplinary methodology advocates would consider the combining of survey techniques and ethnographic techniques as laudable; in this case

exposure of the ethnographer to previous survey findings would exacerbate any natural biases or at worse generate biases in the ethnographer.

This approach seems to expand on the interdisciplinary model. By using ethnographical data along side survey findings the two sets of data can generate validity generally unavailable to the ethnographer or to the survey researcher. If the findings generally validate each other (as in the case of the Safe School Study) this may also be regarded as the acid test of a bias-free study of a policy issue.

Methodology: Constraints

Site Selection

In this particular study the survey phase involved a mail survey of over 4,000 schools, on site surveys of 642 schools and ethnographic case studies of 10 school sites. As a further precaution against bias the ethnographers were at no time exposed to the survey findings. The only information given to the ethnographic team was that the 10 schools were selected: a) to geographically represent the United States, b) to represent size, e.g. both large and small schools, c) to represent various degrees of unsafe conditions, and d) to represent various neighborhoods and SES groups.

Time Constraints

Given the policy-oriented nature of the larger study, the ethnographic portion was severly constrained by time. Although Rist and others are developing solid methodological justifications for "mini-ethnographies;"[2] the ethnographers in this instance were still faced with severe deadlines. The ethnographer did not have the usual leisure and freedom to cultivate trust relationships with informants, nor to follow through with further investigation of "side trips" which help to add to the richness of detail normally

characteristic of ethnographic studies. More than usual reliance had to be placed on interviewing groups, pairs and triads. Immediate transcription and analysis of field notes had to be accomplished so that each school site visit, in addition to gathering new and more data, had to be used for reliability checks. New directions in the line of inquiry had to be developed on the spot in many instances. The "You should really talk to Mr. Edwards" suggestions often could not be followed through because of deadlines looming in the background. In this respect this researcher quite often resorted to more journalism-like techniques when it was absolutely necessary to follow through on informant's suggestions of interviews or observations.

Withholding of Information

For many of our informants, sharing first-hand knowledge and experiences was often equated with tarnishing the image of their school. Some informants felt somewhat embarrassed to be associated with a school regarded by others as an unsafe, violent school. School administrators on the other hand felt a sense of failure or incompetency if their school was viewed as a violent school.[3] At the other extreme are informants who from effervescent school pride tend to overexaggerate on the safety of the school. Because of the very nature of the subject, the ethnographer sometimes had to play the role of detective-investigator to get at the real dimensions of the problem. Even repeated assurances of anonymity did not abate this vexing problem of withholding information.

Encountering Hostile Behavior

Given the unpopular nature of violence and vandalism, the researcher sometimes found himself in the peculiar stance of being attacked for bringing up unpleasantries. Some potential informants flatly refused to share information because of their frustrated feelings of inadequacy in face of the problem. As a catalyst for bringing this to the surface, the interview may

take the form of an attack. There seems to be little the researcher can do to prevent this kind of interaction, except to be aware of the possibility of its occurrance.

Open Knowledge

On the school campuses investigated it was known that my presence was connected with the study of violence and vandalism. It was difficult then to become an unobtrusive observer. In addition, unsolicited volunteering of information became more of a hindrance than a help.

In addition because of the researcher's own third world ethnicity, the Black students confided in me that they "would never tell these things to a White researcher." Upon intermitten inquiry White informants did not express this feeling.

Sources of Data

In addition to the above problems encountered, the other methodological factors of the study were easy to accomplish. On each school campus[5] a total of 14 days on each campus was spent. At Bayside High School, three administrators, ten teachers and 80 students were interviewed (which includes 60 students interviewed as a class). Also interviewed were two custodians, the chief of security for the district and two security guards. The researcher also spent several hours in a security patrol car and several hours of observations in the teachers lounge. These observations, interviews and other activities produced unedited transcribed field notes totaling 154 pages. Similar figures were obtained for the second case study of Lincoln High School. The predominate mode of data collection followed the traditional emic approach[6] where the researcher used the same criteria that informants used as they "observe, interpret and describe their own experiences during the course of life"[7] at the school.

Major Findings

The main purpose of the case studies was to document the inschool processes which contribute to or deter violence and vandalism in the two schools studies. Diagram A graphically illustrate the salient characteristics which seem to predominate in a "safe school" and a "violent school."

The safe school (Lincoln High) serves a moderately large community; it is the oldest school in the district with a strong sense of history. In recent years the school attendance area rapidly shifted from middle income SES to lower SES Third World. Violent racial eruptions, school closure and a general decline in academics followed. The appointment of the present principal resulted in a "turn around" process described amply in the larger case study.

The violent school (Bayside) serves a very typical middle income suburban area of a large metropolitan community. Of the 1,200 students, 200 are bussed in from the central city as part of a volunteer desegregation program. The school's violence and vandalism problems have dramatically escalated with the past three years. Acts have ranged from simple grafetti and bike theft to near total destruction of the library and arson. Bayside's first teacher assult occurred while conducting the study. Little in the way of Bayside's response to the problem seems to help. All informants agreed that the problem gets worse as time goes on.

Conclusions

Problems delineated earlier, were easily solved and proved not to distract from the overall methodology and findings of the study. However, the ethnographer as a policy researcher needsmore thoughtful treatment. Among the team of researchers for this portion of the study most of us felt a genuine awkwardness with extracting policy implications from our field work.

These case studies illustrate that a more detailed, full ethnographic treatment of the problem would be fruitful. The ethnographer needs to spend much more time with the small, identifiable group of vandalizers - other correlates of their behavior needs more clarity.

The structural-social conditions which contribute to violence and vandalism needs more ethnographic attention. Whereas "characteristics" of a safe school is possible from these studies, it is not clear how many of them may be generalizable to other situations, even though these characteristics seem to hold across the national sample.

Table 1 Summary of School Characteristics

Safe School	Violent School
1) high school spirit, pride and enthusiasn, sense of school history	1) lack of school pride, enthusiasm and school spirit
2) highly visible and forceful principal leadership in academic, social and extra curricular areas	2) low profile principal leadership
3) many curricular choices, few academic separations by abilities	3) tracking, separation of students by abilities
4) unified faculty, high morale	4) fractionated faculty, low morale
5) school is small in size	5) few opportunities for parental volunteers
6) principal, teachers know most students by first name	6) grafetti, liter
7) community persons hired as hall moniters	7) stereotyping among students, teachers
8) parent volunteers frequent school	8) complicated and plentiful school rules
9) school plant physically clean, no litter, no grafetti	9) small core group identifiable by most cause of vandalism problems
10) mechanism for airing student grievances and complaints	10) no outlets for student grievances and complaints
11) few signs of interracial hostilities	11) underlying racial hostility
	12) counselors used as disciplinarians

References

1. Foster, George M., Applied Anthropology. Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Company, 1969, p. 70-71.

2. Rist, R. The Urban School: A Factory for Failure: A Study of Education in American Society, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1973, especially chapter six.

3. See Appendix A, in particular the interview with the district's Chief of Security Division.

4. See Appendix A "Views from the Bottom - Marilyn, Annette and Melinda."

5. Two case studies were conducted - for lack of resources to duplicate only one unedited study is attached to the report. "Lincoln: A Turn Around School" may be obtained from the author upon request.

6. See Harris, Marvin,"Emics, Etics and the New Ethnography," in The Rise of Anthropological Theory. New York: Crowell, 1968.

7. See Spadley, James and McCurdy, David, The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society. Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1972, pp. 39-57.

APPENDIX A

Bayside Junior High School: In the Middle and Going Down

A Case Study of Violence and Vandalism in Schools

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Organization of the Study

Part One: The Larger Context of Bayside's Problem

- I The 1975-76 Statistical Digest of School Crime
- II The District Security Division
- III Views from Outside: Security Personnel

Part Two: Views from the Top

- I Bayside Junior High School
- II Bayside Administrative Staff Views

Part Three: Views from the Middle

- I Teacher-Staff Views
- II The Teacher's Lounge and Lunch Room (observation notes)

Part Four: Views from the Bottom

- I An Upper Division English Class
- II The Dummy Class
- III Marilyn, Annette and Malinda

Part Five: Analysis and Conclusions

- I Violence and Vandalism: A Multidimensional Problem
- II Bayside: A Roller Coaster School
- III "We're the dummies": A Problem of Images
- IV Remedies

The 1975-76 Statistical Digest

Bayside Junior High School is located in a large metropolitan area in the Western United States. Like most metropolitan school districts, various administrative divisions compile formal year-end reports of their activities to present to the Superintendent and the Board of Education. This school district compiles such a report. It covers the activities of the school Security Division. Specifically, the report is a digest of "monetary loss attributed to crimes against District property and criminal acts committed against District personnel and pupils".

The net total in loss for the 1975-76 year was $3,821,664. Each security person interviewed in this study agrees that under-reporting is a conscious, common practice, especially in areas of high incidents. Compensating for under-reporting, the net total would exceed four million dollars. The variety of crimes on school campuses are a testimony to the conjecture that schools are not immune to the ills of society, or at worst, schools are a reflection of society - a microcosm. The schools are hit by robbery, assault and battery, sex offences, burglary, theft, malicious vandalism, arson and narcotics activities.

Whereas firearms (handguns, shotguns, etc.) on campuses were down 33%, knives and other weapons on campus were up by 21%. With these weapons, a total of 10,460 criminal acts were reported occurring in the schools. The report further states that 6,699 suspects were handled through administrative processes and/or arrests. In some areas of the District, burglary, theft, and vandalism are of such high incidence that a day does not pass unless several of these occur and the acts are doubled over the weekends.

This seemingly innocent report is grim! One is actually overwhelmed by some of the huge numbers, e.g., 222 eleven year olds arrested or processed for criminal acts; 779 adults over 18 arrested and processed; 792 assaults and batteries; 5,075 burglaries; 422 knives and other weapons confiscated from lockers or from persons threatening bodily harm. And the invisible losses: thousands of hours of instructional time lost, the instilling of fear, the shaping of an armed, violent-oriented world of schools.

Against this backdrop, Bayside Junior High School, the subject of this study, may seem without problems. The report further states that Bayside reported a total of only 13 cases to the security division (four burglary cases and nine cases of theft). Bishop Junior High, on the other hand, reported 10 assaults, six robberies, 34 burglaries, 17 thefts, five vandalisms, 18 narcotics incidents, and 16 trespassings. Compared to Bayside, this leads one to suspect that two different worlds exist in these two schools. However, the surface illusion may be misleading. This case study reveals that Bayside is struggling against very real, serious problems of violence and vandalism. Given the neighborhood setting, and the past history of the school, Bayside is indeed in serious trouble. The Security Chief characterizes this as a school with "no problems". His assessment is influenced by Bayside's relative standing throughout the district. Yet, the Bayside persons interviewed for this study are not similarly impressed; they see Bayside as a troubled school. Spirits are not particularly high, optimism seems on the decline as they describe the problem. Thus, Bayside may appear to be a bright spot in the total, somber picture of the District. However, rather than thinking of the metaphorically bright spot, the interviewees convey a sense of gloom, frustration and anger at not being able to solve it's violence problems.

Bayside Junior High School dramatically illustrates the depth of the District-wide problem. It would be difficult to view Bayside without this contextual background of extreme violence, crime and vandalism.

The Security Division

The security division of this district contains 300 security agents trained and sworn in as peace officers. This police force is the third largest in this metropolitan county. The total security division consists of four communications operators, 16 watchmen, 50 special officers for adult schools, 41 security agents and assistants for night patrol, 221 day patrol agents, and eight security agents for investigations. A force of 37 persons administer, supervise, and render supportive services for the security division.

There is agreement across all interviews that the problems of crime, violence, and vandalism are increasing. Persons interviewed from the security division do not see the need for more manpower, persons outside the division think more agents are needed. From the perspective of agents, more training, role expansion and redefining their professional relationships are more desirable responses to the increasing violence rather than increasing the number of agents. Each agent encountered while compiling information for this study was very impressive - well dressed, in shirt and tie, neatly trimmed hair cuts, cordial, no weapons exposed. They looked much like business men on a brief visit to campus. In the interviews, respondants verify that the agents are well known on the school campus, well liked and respected. They seem to stand out in the school because of their contrast to the teacher's mode of dress (jeans, open shirts, extremely casual). They are well liked because the agent sees this level of acceptance as one of his major goals in the school.

There are many indications that these agents are firmly entrenched in the fabric of the school. Most adults in the school perceive of the security agent as a necessary and desirable part of the school staffing make-up. The security agent plays an important role in creating a safe psychological atmosphere as well as assuring an orderly environment, relatively free of disruptive student behavior. Another indication of the permanency of this division is that it's total funds for operating "is budgeted by the Board of Education", it's survival is not dependent on outside, extramural funds.

In 1964, when the formal expansion of the division occurred, it was in hopes of deterring the acts described in this study. Instead, the damage, incidents, etc. increased each year, even though the students interviewed tell us they would not perform certain acts of violence and vandalism if it is easy to get caught.

When asked about deterrents, many teachers suggested "things", i.e., intrusion alarms, guard dogs, more punitive measures, more security agents, etc. The agents themselves suggest person-oriented solutions - developing more sensitivity, involving neighbors in security watches, more relevant courses, change the image of the trouble-maker student. Such a stand still requires determined and creative leadership to come forward with risk-taking solutions. This section of the study suggests that the security division more so than the schools themselves hold the potential for that kind of leadership.

The District Security Agent

The security division of this district is tucked away in one of the far buildings of the central administration offices. The telephones, and one office, are open 24 hours a day to receive calls of vandalism, break-ins, etc., as well as to accommodate the night crew. In this respect, the operation is much like an extension of the metropolitan police division. Although many of the security division's activities are coordinated with the metropolitan police, this school operation is pretty much on its own in terms of arrests, processing, collecting for damages, etc. The local police only intersect with the security division when a booking is required and when extreme cases of violence, such as riots, require large numbers of man-power. In almost every interview, the metropolitan police were not mentioned. The security agent is the symbol of enforcement on the campus. Although the high schools may have one or two resident agents on campus, one does not get the impression that the schools are an "armed camp".

"This report is 50% accurate" says Chief Maxwell. "Many of our schools under-report because they don't want to be seen as a bad school. Our best reporting is from campuses where there are resident agents. Grammar schools and junior highs don't report accurately".

He goes on to state that "in one junior high school, the kids actually walk down the hall smoking pot. Extortion, robbery, assaults, are daily occurences - that's why our primary aim is protecting people". The Chief explains further that the psychological, as well as physical, well being of students and staff is a far more valuable resource than the building itself; his division tries to create a school that is not only safe, but they strive to make persons feel more secure and safe within the confines.

They want teachers and students to see the security division as providing this atmosphere.

> "We have a goodly number of assaults on teachers, students, security agents. In one school, the intruder made the teacher disrobe in front of her class. He made her strip in front of the class. He said he only wanted to take her money when we caught him. He took her keys - so we had to stake out her house until we caught him. Assaults such as this result in a loss of class time, it instills fear in the teachers, creates undue anxiety and in the end it diminishes the teacher's capacity to teach. Valuable instructional time is lost and in the long run the students suffer. That is why people protection has to be our priority."

The Chief continued to expand on the atmosphere of fear prevailing in many of the high incident schools; teachers lock their doors just to keep outside people out of their classrooms, teachers have been raped on the school grounds and an 11 year old child was kidnapped from the school and raped in a nearby home in the neighborhood. The presence of the resident agent is an effective deterrent; in fact, the Chief stated that in many cases the resident agent is the only deterrent to many of these crimes and violent acts.

The district is beginning to experiment with more creative uses of the agents. The local metropolitan police also started a new program of having policemen as teachers in high incident schools, the security division recently broke up a large narcotics circle in one of the high schools through an undercover agent posing as a high school student. The Chief regrets that the bulk of the division's time must be spent in protection, "we haven't been able to do anything long-range to help with the problem".

"In the grammar schools the kids still respond to authority; it's between grammar school and junior high school that the transition occurs. Something makes the kids participate in drugs and vandalism. It's the grammar school age youngster that has to be the target of any long-range programs. We have a traffic education program in the grammar schools. All of the reports tell how receptive they are at this age.

Now the vandalism problem is mostly a problem for the nine to 14 year olds. Burglary starts between 14 and 18, this is also the age for arson and assaults. So it would seem that any anti-vandalism efforts would start before the age of nine.

We have found that when kids are tired of everything else, they will turn to arson. We have had more than $100,000 lost in fires after vandalism. With most of the arsonists, it is usually not their first break-in. Arson is a pretty big problem for us. We are losing at least one classroom per week to arson! Arson is back! At one time, the arsons didn't start until three months before summer. It used to be that arson started just before summer. Now it has picked up in intensity. It is all the way up to November now. So far this year we have had a $750,000 loss in arson. And Spring just started! This is a conservative estimate because we don't get reports of the small damage that can be cleaned up by the custodial staff."

Although Chief Maxwell is very proud of the job the staff is doing, he mentions the need for updating and expanding their training. He believes training in the areas of adolescent psychology, crisis intervention, juvenile law, community dynamics, and human relations would be especially helpful.

With an impending desegregation suit, Chief Maxwell believes training in the human relations area would be essential - many others throughout the district expect conflict and violence to follow the desegregation implementation. Chief Maxwell thinks the agents can be utilized more in the classroom - instructional programs and they could become involved with more interventions before the child commits an act of violence or vandalism. However, such an expanded role of the security requires additional training. He implied strongly that such training and role redefinition could take place; his division oculd not function in a preventative capacity but only respond to symptoms.

The child offender's relationship to the courts needs serious reevaluation:

> "There was this kid who killed another youngster at _____ High School. After taking the case to court with formal charges, that kid was back in the same area three months later ...this is disheartening the other children see this and say 'murder is not that bad'. We catch kids vandalizing a school and the next week we catch them again in the same school...we need to demonstrate strongly that this kind of conduct is not to be tolerated. Yet, it is difficult if the kids are running around free after committing the acts. ...we have one judge who will not permit us to prosecute. He refuses to let us bill the parents for the damage...we have had dozens of cases thrown out of the court because of this judge."

On this note, the Chief as well as the security agents agree that the offender who is dealt with lightly often becomes a repeater. Chief Maxwell and each agent describes the "typical" profile of a vandalizer or student who commits other criminal acts: He is a repeater, he not only has academic problems at school but he has severe home problems; he is of low mentality and likes to play with matches.

> "We have no systematic, accurate profile on these youngsters, if we did we could start an intervention program before the child vandalizes, murders, or assaults a teacher. As it stands now, the child must commit a violent act before we take action - by that time he is a two or three time repeater and it's too late."

The other security agents agree most strongly. Since they are closer (on a daily basis) to the problem, they can actually identify this youngster who is predisposed to commit acts of vandalism or violence, point him out to you on the campus "and nine out of ten times we're right, we'll see him in the V.P.'s* office after he vandalizes or assaults someone". "I know of a youngster who fit this profile a few years ago. He is 18 years old now; he has 65 offences on his record and he has never spent a day in jail!"

From the security agent's perspective, he faces all of the problems described by the Chief and perhaps more. The agent's day is filled with responding to V.P. requests for processing apprehended student violators; "the philosophy of the security agent is for us to maintain a low-profile approach with the intention of rehabilitating the minor offenders and providing on-the-spot counseling". All security personnel agree that acts of violence and vandalism are increasing each year, the situation is not improving with the present methods of responding.

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* V.P.: Vice Principal, usually in charge of handling violators through the security divisions' processing.

Yet, when asked if additional security agents were needed, the emphatic answer was "No. Preventative interventions, retraining and role expansion for the agent is needed more than more agents".

The agents feel as though the schools are not stressing "good citizenship and student responsibility...the youngsters want adult concern." They concur that the school's present method of handling apprehended violators "is not very effective" In essence, it only sends the youngsters away to begin the vicious cycle of going from one school to another..(the school) rids itself of the problem.* Some alternatives have been suggested: community patrols on weekends (when most break-ins occur), more parental involvement at athletic events (where serious assaults and fights often occur), and perhaps more burglar alarms. However, agent Anderson thinks the students themselves should take the responsibility of deterring violence and vandalism. He cited an exemplary Human Relations Club organized and sponsored by a faculty member. These Human Relations Club members act as a very active force in preventing race riots, and other acts of violence. He and agent Dearborne stated:

> "Every school with interracial student bodies should have these clubs. I was involved for three days at _____ High School because of racial problems. The hate was so strong you could cut it with a knife. I was shocked at the wall of hate I saw in the kids at that school!"

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* This is a reaction to the opportunity transfer which is used extensively throughout the system. This simply means that the apprehended violator is transferred to another school for a period of one year - after that time, if he has not gotten into any other trouble, the student is free to come back to his home school. Throughout the duration of the study almost all informants expressed extreme negative feelings about this process but they seem to think that this is the only method of dealing with the problem. Thus, on the whole, the feelings are quite ambivalent regarding transfer.

Within this context and not that of the Statistical Digest, Bayside is plagued with every form of violence, vandalism, narcotics activities, assaults and racial hate described by the security division. On this topic, agent Anderson states:

"Vandalism problems are widespread among the various groups of students. It is not peculiar to any particular ethnic group, social class, or to any particular school area. Just about every school in the _____ District experiences some form of violence or vandalism.

Bayside: The Giant Pink Labyrinth

Views from the Top

The Bayside neighborhood is a pleasant, blue collar, suburban area in the extreme north end of the metropolis. This end of the city has a fair share of light industries concentrated just south of the freeway; i.e., data processing firms, Safeway cookie and cracker plant, an aircraft plant, a brewery, and various other light industries. Approximately two miles east of this industrial area is the Bayside neighborhood surrounding the junior high school.

The immediate school neighborhood is a curious mixture of low-income family apartments, adult apartments, newly constructed working class town houses, single family homes and commercial businesses located along the nearby heavily traveled boulevard. Approximately two miles north of the junior high school is one of the large campuses of the state college system.

The most common structure throughout the neighborhood is the single family home. Many were built by developers in the late '40's and were purchased by returning veterans, eager to rear their families in suburbia. However, many residents of the city describe the area as a "white flight" area where blue collar families escaped from the growing ethnic populations in the central city. Here, the lots are larger than one would expect - many homes have long 20-30 ft. spacious lawns and driveways leading to the house. Directly across from Bayside School is a home with stables, four horses, sheep, and other barn animals. The typical home is between three and four bedrooms, most are well cared for, there are few "For Sale" signs and not many younger children are seen playing on the walkways and lawns.

In fact, school personnel informed me that there is a steady decrease in school age children in the attendance area of Bayside Junior High School and it's feeder elenentary schools.

Toward the university are more expensive homes with more square footage; the opening and expansion of the university has attracted "a lot of middle-class families into our attendance area".* A few miles to the south of the school, within clear view, are the "homes in the hills with swimming pools, tennis courts and horses - some of these homes used to fall within our attendance area". However, within the more immediate area, the general impression of school personnel is that the neighborhood is not as nice as it used to be - there are more apartments opening up. Thus, the attendance area draws upon a varied mixture of socio-economic groups. One faculty member informed me that within recent years, new schools have opened and these tend to siphon off the middle-class children. They seem to imply that the school should be more middle-class and these newer schools should not take away the better students.

The ethnic mixture of the neighborhood is representative of "every ethnic group one could find in the United States", Black Americans have always been present in the neighborhood. However, in recent years, more have migrated to this section along with Mexican Americans, although Whites are by far the largest group in the schools. Bayside Junior High School is still basically a "White" school where a small percentage of non-white students attend.

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* Quotes are from school personnel unless otherwise noted.

One's first impression of Bayside Junior High School is that of bigness and fences. The campus is located on a 28 acre rectangular lot enclosed by a chainlink fence around the perimeter of the plot. Inside the school grounds are more chainlink fences sectioning off various other parts of the school campus. Numerous gates are chained and pad-locked except for one entrance, thus the school personnel can seemingly maintain a closed campus situation.

The next most visable feature of the campus is its interconnection of covered walkways. There are 15 cottage-like classroom building connected to each other by covered, cemented walkways. The placement of these classroom cottages, though orderly, gives the overall effect of a labyrinth designed for a grand scale Skinnerian experiment. Although this is architecturally a very typical school for this area of the country, there is so much more of it than one usually finds.

Each cottage is painted a pastel pink color with several doors and many windows. The entire physical plant is comprised of 70 classrooms, a gymnasium, a large auditorium, a multipurpose room, two student lunch areas (covered and uncovered), two faculty cafeterias, library, student store, principal's offices, custodial storehouse and offices, a home economics cottage, two faculty lounges, an agricultural center and several large athletic playing fields.

The physical plant, build in 1952, is in excellent condition. The campus is interspersed with plantings of trees, shrubbery, lawn and plants, all neatly maintained with a professional appearance. To achieve this, there is a staff of eight full-time custodians; three of these are "daytime", that is, their hours closely coincide with the student's schedule. The other five are night crew - their day begins after the student day. Thus, the campus has five custodians on the grounds until eleven or eleven thirty each night.

There are no signs of vandalism on the property - no broken glass, i.e., windows, doors or student lockers. The teacher's parking area is relatively isolated from the school and there is no security guard or locked gates to this area. There are no armed or uniformed security personnel on the campus. Reaction to my presence (obviously a stranger) was with smiles, hellos, and a friendly aid for direction. When it is time to change classes, the crowds seem orderly, there is no excessive policing and monitoring by teachers. Bayside, on first sight, comes across as a genteel, polite, ultra-pleasant surrounding. I could not imagine any family objecting to sending their children to this attractive pink labyrinth.

There are 1,650 students on this campus. To administer their various education programs there are 68 teachers, three counselors, an administrative dean, two assistant principals, two secretaries and one principal. The organization begins with Mrs. Ellie Brown, the principal. Mrs. Brown definitely does not administer in the autocratic style. She appears to be "low-key", unabrasive, and delegates much authority and responsibility to her staff.

As one wanders around the offices, it is easy to conclude that it is not the place for discipline. Although a few such cases wander in, the bulk of the activity here seems to be managerial. The assistant principals advise me that the discipline is effectively maintained by the couselors - one for each grade. On the other hand, a brief visit to the counselors' suite of offices quickly illustrates where the discipline logjam is located. Waiting students are constantly stacked from wall to wall in the reception area.

Their conversations reveal that they are here for anything ranging from cutting class to fighting, extortion, insolence, theft, or minor vandalism. The contrast in the two office areas is striking to say the least. The administrators, then, see only the most severe cases. This process allows them to function as "instructional leaders to the rest of the faculty".* Each counselor assigned to each grade then handles discipline as well as regular counseling duties. In line with the counselors is the administrative dean. Although Bayside Junior High School does not qualify for district salary support of this position,** Mrs. Brown has managed to relieve a teacher of five periods of teaching to handle this position.

The next administrative layer is composed of department chairpersons; Bayside's curriculum offerings are quite conventional: foreign language, mathematics, music, science, english, art, industrial art, physical education, social studies, homemaking and special education. Each of these 12 "departments" has a chairperson who handles personnel and instructional matters at the departmental level. Next in line are the 68 teachers, median age of 35-44, average of 12 years teaching experience, approximately half male and half female and 20% are non-white.***

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* Self-description of assistant principal roles.

** Schools with 1,800 or more students qualify for district support of this administrative position.

*** However, during my visits, I believe this figure reflects the entire school staff - my informal count was three non-white teachers and one Black counselor.

Beneath the teachers are several moontime aides, all of whom are college students from the nearby university and finally, the cafeteria workers and custodial staff. This administrative structure is also very conventional, thus assuring that Bayside is an ultra-traditional, "typical" suburban junior high school.

Violence and vandalism at Bayside evokes a unified reaction, description and analysis from the administrative staff. There is agreement that the problem is getting worse, there is only a handful of students (estimates range from 1-5%) involved in such acts, most breakins occur on the weekends, and there are three main "types" of violence and vandalism acts. Mr. Taylor, the school custodian stated:

> "Vandalism is the number one problem here...it creates a lot of overtime for my crew. It is expensive. The worst problem is grafitti. The next would be window breakage - mostly from B.B. guns and rock-throwing. And our very worst problem right now is breaking the fire alarm boxes. Sometimes six or seven fire alarm boxes a day are broken. As fast as I fix one, another is broken. Then there are trash can fires. The kids are constantly setting fires to the trash cans. When the trees drop leaves, they burn the leaves; they even burn the shrubbery around the landscape. And then there are the lockers. Broken lockers are a problem; they pass the lockers, kick off the lock and steal the contents."

During the school day, all except one restroom is open. Otherwise sinks are town from the wall, paper towel dispensers are ripped down, mirrors are broken, the partitions between the toilets are torn from the wall, paper towels are torn from the dispensers piled on the floor and set fire to, and finally the rolls of toilet tissues are stuffed into the toilets which are flushed and floods the restroom.

One of the vice principals described all of this incredible destruction as occurring within a one-hour time span when a restroom was left unattended. The one restroom left open during the lunch time is watched by two university students hired just to watch the restrooms. There is constant reference to the destructive acts focused on the restrooms, the school has decided not to replace mirrors and paper dispensers.

Therefore, the first major "type" of violence - vandalism acts are willful destruction to the school and personal property. Anything that can be broken is broken. There were a rash of locker fires - the student would repeatedly drop lighted matches through the vent slots until the contents were ignited. The school spent several hundreds of dollars to put in metal plates over the vent slots to prevent locker fires. Following this preventative action, the students now squirt permabond on the locks which drys to a permanent hardness and the custodian has to cut the lock with a bolt cutter. The administrators agree that the ultimate solution is to probably discontinue locker use, as they have discontinued restroom use. Bike theft and vandalism was so rampant that there is now a fenced area where all bikes are kept and the area is monitored by a watchman throughout the day.

The second "type" of school violence and vandalism are assaults and fights. There are daily occurrences. Larger students extort money from smaller students, as well as pick and encourage other fights. Insolence toward adults is on the increase with many of the students threatening to beat up teachers. Bayside's first student assault on a teacher occurred during the preparation of this report (see teacher response section for further details).

Interracial hostility is also a constant source of this second type of violence and vandalism (see student section for more detail).

A third type of violence described by the administrators are breakins. These are of two types - those most likely indulged in by adults and those indulged in by the students. The student breakins are usually accompanied by extreme destruction - destroying files, defecating on the floors and smearing feces about, splashed paint, any object that can be broken usually is. The adults simply break in, take whatever can be converted to cash and leave. Usually, the only damage in these cases are the broken windows. These breakins occur about twice a year. The latest breakin resulted in the loss of almost all of the multimedia equipment; T.V. cameras, 35 mm. cameras, developing equipment, lens, etc. In the past, entire rooms of furniture have been stolen and thrown over the fence. The most "notorious" of these breakins were the home economics cottage and the library. Bayside's library facilities are truly spectacular - it is the second largest Junior High collection in the district. Three years ago it was 80% destroyed by two vandals who were students in the school. The home ec. cottage had all its furniture, glassware, and other protable equipment stolen. It was recovered in the neighborhood a few weeks later.

Elaborate precautions have been implemented at Bayside to deter breakins. The student store is burglar alarmed. A detector system costing several thousand dollars is ordered for the library, the multimedia room was burglar-proofed with iron grids at some windows and boarded spaces where windows used to be.

When students are apprehended in any of these acts, they are sent to the vice principal's office after processing by the counselor. An automatic three-day suspension is written up. The student returns with the parents and a formal "hearing" is held. Acts of a very serious nature (including all narcotics incidents) involve the security agent and, when arrest is required, the metropolitan police. The hearing with the parents results in either a severe reprimand and threats of more punative action of it occurs again, or the hearing will result in arrest, booking, court hearing and an opportunity transfer. Rarely are expulsions evoked. Repeated offenders may go on a rather long waiting list to be permanently assigned to a special school for just these kinds of children.

All of the administrators think that the opportunity transfer is undesirable but it is their only tool for dealing with the deviant child. They imply that teachers could do more to help out and they are satisfied that the appropriate district divisions and the security division are supportive and respond quickly to the school's requests. The school's response to these infractions are quided by a "handbook" published by the district. The handbook, more than 100 pages thick, lists procedures to follow for every violation from murder to insolence. Violence and/or vandalism is a serious endeavor on the part of the students and the school's intent to deter it is just as systematic and determined. This pitted warfare between the school and Bayside students has all the resemblance of armed warfare.

When asked about causes and remedies, the administrators and teachers characteristically respond with suggestions of "things" - more burglar alarms, guard dogs, night watchmen, more locked, patrolled areas, a resident agent, etc.

Conspiciously absent are any thoughts about preventative aspects or instructional-classroom suggestions.

Likewise the administrators see all of the blame or causes imminating from "others", i.e., changing family values, violence glorification on television, single parent families, the changing social structure of the neighborhood, drugs, or a general loss of respect for traditional values. In face of these causes, the administrators imply that they are helpless to intervene in these powerful social processes, the school is completely victimized by the will of the deviant student vandalizer, thief, or hostile beater.

Views from the Middle

The teachers at Bayside are well experienced. Many of them have taught at Bayside Junior High School almost as long as the school has been here. Built in 1952, several of the teachers have been here for 20 years, one has been here for 22 years. The teachers who have been here for the longest feel the strongest about the "loss of respect for property". These teachers often comment that the physical facilities are still among the best in the city and the students don't realize how well-off they are. The library is the second largest of any junior high school in the district and books are defaced, torn and stolen laily. The librarian is still shocked at the total vandalism of the library which occurred three years ago. She also pointed out the water line where vandals flooded the storage room behind the circulation desk.

All of the teachers complain that they do not have students as good as those of 10 years ago.

> "It was much better 10 years ago and even better 18 years ago when I first came here. We used to have very fine students. Although we still have some fine students now. The overall academic level is down - whether the I.Q. has gone down, I couldn't say, but the overall academic level is down from what it used to be. Years ago, we used to have more high-ability kids, today we're more on the lower spectrum. We used to have - when I was social studies chairman, way back then, I used to set up for 19 sections - in 8th grade we'd have three high, three low, and the rest would be average. Now it's skewed to the bottom. You're lucky if you get one high-ability section in the 8th or 9th grade. The academic level has really come down.

In addition, all of the teachers complain about having to continuously discipline the students for minor infractions. They describe their day as leaning more toward policing rather than teaching. Several of them have had their classrooms broken into and vandalized. The latest being the multimedia room and the band room. Most of the equipment stolen from these burglaries has not been recovered and will be difficult to replace. During visits to the classroom the teachers pointed out how desks are broken in half, books destroyed and acoustical tiles ripped and hanging from the ceiling (the students poke the ceiling with the window poles).

Emphatically, all teachers tell us that the situation is getting worse - more student insolence and even a student assault on a teacher. They blame "changing values, lack of respect for property rights, and violence on T.V." as primary causes. Most of them also say that the present system of dealing with the student violator is not effective in deterring the violence, they think more diligence on the part of the administrative staff would be more effective. There were several accusations that the principal and vice principal were not effective, not harsh enough on student violators. One teacher went so far as to say that the school is literally being run by the students - they have no guidance or adult authority figures to set limits for them.

There is uniform agreement that the counselors should not be involved with discipline matters:

> "I think it's a lousy system! The counselors are supposed to be friendly with the child. The counselor is like a psychiatrist. The counselor tries to work quietly with the child and help him solve his problems.

All of a sudden the counselor is the same person the kid goes to when he gets in trouble. So you've got the priest and the policeman in the same body - it just won't work, at least not at this school. One of our counselors wants to leave because he's not cut out to be a policeman; he wants to counsel, not punish. I think the vice principals should be in charge of discipline. Now the way it is, the kids who really want counseling can't get into see the counselor because the discipline cases take all of his time.

A girl in one of my 7th grade classes was a very bright girl. She had gotten all A's in elementary school. In this same class was a boy who was a neighbor of the girl, he also had gotten all A's in elementary school. By the time they both got to 8th grade, she was trying to become the worst behaved girl in school so she could look big in the eyes of her peers. She was constantly in and out of school on suspensions, she stopped getting good grades. They boy told us she did this to be accepted by her peers - now the boy went on an continued making good grades - he is a model student.

They are skillful at finding ways of doing vandalizing acts. They think of many angles to destroy, damage. They think it is fun.

The loss of corporal punishment has caused much disruptive behavior here. The kids know we can't swat them - so they do as they damn well please. They tell us "don't put your hands on me - don't touch me!"

We are too remote from our students; with 30 to 40 students, they become anonymous. We lose sight of the disruptive student. The other, well-behaved student will not come forward and let the teacher know that they are annoyed. Very often the students have the attitude that 'I can get away with it, and as long as I can, then I'll do it!'

Bayside teachers are not happy. There seems to be very little enthusiasm about the school as a whole. I never heard any special praise for any aspect of the school's academic program or of special extra-curricular programs. As though embarrased by their lack of positive contribution, some teachers half-heartedly stated that there were some good students at Bayside, even though there is total agreement that only a very few students cause all of the violence and vandalism problems. The teachers see the problem as urgent, requiring immediate, harsh action.

> "If I were to redesign this school today, I'd take out every window. I would have security agents armed and on campus all day, every day. I'd have T.V. monitors in every nook and cranny, and I'd have one or two security agents and guard dogs roam around the grounds at night and during weekends.

Views from the Bottom

The students of Bayside Junior High are lively, friendly, and seem to enjoy an easy-going ambiance on the campus. Initially, it is difficult to detect the social groups among them - the style of dress is fairly uniform, there seems to be no particular territories guarded by certain groups.

The ethnic groups are easy to distinguish - the Mexican students tend to cluster together, so do the Black students. Although there are 200 bussed-in Black students, many Black students can be seen walking home after classes. They are sometimes paired off with White or Chicano friends.

The nutrition break and lunch time finds all 1,600 plus students crowded into one section of the campus housing the student store (candy, popcorn, and other sweets), the sandwich windows and the steam table lunches. Large metal picnic tables are provided outdoors for eating. The most striking thing about the eating area is the long metal railings leading to the windows which have a small slit for passing through the money and food. This arrangement bears a striking resemblance to the betting windows at the horse races.

As many students sit on the asphalt in groups of two, three, and four to eat lunch as those sitting at the tables. As many sit on top of the tables as those who sit properly with legs under the table. Only one small restroom is open during this time. At the entrance of each is a noontime aide whose single purpose is to watch the restrooms so that no fights are started, so that no vandalism occurs and that smoking is not indulged in. These restrooms seem to be crowded with socializing students rather than those wanting to attend to bodily functions. The restrooms are very popular places.

After lunch, when everyone has cleared the eating area for class, the empty eating area is a shocking sight. There is litter up to one's ankles, spilled milk, half eaten sandwiches, fruit peels, squashed cups, candy paper, etc. The filth is overwhelming.* The trash cans, spaced strategically around the area are empty. With the scavenging sea gulls in the area, one wonders if it can ever be restored to it's former state. This is the first indication one gets that something is wrong at Bayside.

Upon closer inspection, one notices rather tight knit groups of certain "types". Some trying to be cool or hip, others seem more "clean cut". The Blacks rarely socialized with the Chicanos or Whites; the library crowd is already settled into the library for lunchtime, office helpers and teacher aides have gone to their stations and the athletic fields are already filled with the "Jocks". Student life here is synonymous with group life. If one does not belong to a group, life must be quite miserable.

After school, the busses are lined up to take the Black students back to the central city area. The bus ride is long - Bayside is at least 30-35 minutes from the central city, given the afternoon traffic tie ups, the ride can take 40-45 minutes. One of the bussed students told me that they must be at the bus stop at 6:30 a.m. in order to get to school for the 8:00 a.m. first period. The library, and a few other facilities are opened before classes - however, the library is usually filled with it's quota by the time the bus students arrive. How can one distinguish a bus student from a neighborhood Black? It appears as though the few interracial friendships to be seen are indulged in by neighborhood Black youngsters - the bussed-in Black youngsters cling tenaciously to each other.

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* The head custodian spoke at length about this nasty habit.

They have a strong sense of group identity, and operate strong negative sanctions against any form of interracial friendship. The behavior of this special group of youngsters is another indication something is wrong at Bayside.

"Will you girls get out of this area!" shouts Ms. Green, the assistant principal. Students are not allowed in this area of the campus during lunch time. In addition, there seems to be several other areas restricted to student use, in fact, it seems as though the students are confined to the one small lunch-library area during nutrition and break time. Just about every restroom on campus is locked. Locked restrooms, restricted areas, numerous rules, makes student life easy to manage by the adults in the school. Life from the bottom up must seem fairly restrictive.

So, a school day in the life of a Bayside student should be quite predictable: School arrival about 8:00 a.m., closed campus - fenced-in campus, group hassles at 10:00 a.m. nutrition break, classes, group hassles at noon, classes, dismissal (2:45) and then the skillful manipulation of one's way home. If you ride the bus, your group affiliation is decided for you - you need only worry about rocks or other misiles being thrown at the bus by the White students. Given a week's visit to Bayside, one begins to understand one of the grafitti scrawls on the wall: "I hate this fucking school!"

The school's rigid tracking system only exacerbates the highly structured peer group situation. The upper division student sees himself above the student who lights fires in the lockers, extorts money and vandalizes. They snobbishly refer to "them, those and those other students" as the violators. They still find themselves amused at the acts of the other students.

Rickey: Some kids, especially the big ones, look for fights - they walk around picking on the little kids. One time we were walking to class and we heard this banging on the locker. Well, we opened the locker and this little kid was stuffed in the locker! (Laughter) He could have been hurt. Or burned to death!

Marilyn: We have lot's of fires. They have burned the bushes over by the gym. Students were standing around watching this bush burn and enjoying it - they thought it was funny!

#:* Yeah, those are the pyro's!

Marilyn: We have at least three fires a week - mostly burning trash in the trash can.

#: And the kids all run over and clap and cheer at the fire.

Susie: They have put metal plates on all the lockers so they can't start fires in the lockers anymore. We used to have fires in the lockers every day before they put the metal plates on.

Kevin: At lunch time, the big kids beat up on the little kids.

Jean: In the gym they throw shoes around the dressing room, they throw empty cans of deodorant - that's dangerous, kids could get hurt with those.

They burned the towels in the gym last week - just put a match to them and burned this pile of towels.

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* #: Interjections by unidentified students.

Howie: There have been three breakins since I've been here, the band room was broken into last and many of the instruments were stolen. There is a breakin every two or three months.

Larry: There is no respect for school property. There was a breakin to the library and our video equipment was stolen - they took the video camera - it was an inside job, maybe.

Mark: Some of the teachers are afraid and when they find a teacher who is afraid, they really put them on - just for the fun of it. They like to see the teacher get afraid of them.

Larry: The teacher could easily take the kid to the office - but they don't want to go through all that trouble, you know. The teachers arent dedicated.

Allan: I know a lot of teachers who start out being very nice. They are concerned about us, then they get turned off and they don't care.

The students say that the troublemakers are low-achievers, they are to be found in the "dummy class", and the E.H. (educationally handicapped) classes. The troublemakers are just as troubled at home, they have problems at home and sometimes the indulge in vandalism to vent their frustrations from home. They also vandalize, beat up other kids and generally make a nuisance of themselves because they want to look big in the eyes of their friends. "There is a lot of peer pressure in this school", says one of the upper division students.

The peer groups can be vividly described by each Bayside student. The cheerleaders, their boyfriends, the ESL group, the Chicano and Black groups, the nurds, the geeks, the smokers, etc.

Each group develops it's own identity norms and levels severe sanctions if anyone strays from the group. Whereas the students do not particularly demean these groups (they are all members of one or more), they do think that some kids may be "imprisoned" in the peer group and can't get out. "He has to act big to be accepted - even though he may not want to do that lousy thing for acceptance".

Vince: Yes, they start fires just to get attention. I think some come to school just to start fires.

#: Those are the pyro's!

Mark: They do that for attention and enjoyment - they stand around and clap and cheer. The teachers - now the teachers don't even worry or try to put the trash fires out.

Vangie: When there is a fight all the kids run to the fight yelling "Fight, fight, fight!" Yeah, they really enjoy seeing people fight each other.

Barbara: Another thing that happens to these kids is that they might mess up in elementary school and try to straighten up when they get here ...but the teachers look up their records and see that they messed up in elementary school and then they won't help them. Then they get further behind in class. You can imagine how it feels to be in class where you don't understand not one thing going down. When you don't know what's going on - you mess with people, pick on them, and start a fight.

#: Yeah, that's right - they put you in those dummy classes.

#: Who wants to teach kids with smart mouths? Always smart mouthing- I'd have nothing to do with them.

#: No one likes counselors anyway.

The students all seem to have knowledge of the persons responsible for the bulk of violence and vandalism. When asked about the kids who vandalize many of the remarks read as the sample following:

Dan: Well, I know who they are.

#: Everybody knows who they are!

Dan: But I don't know them personally! This one boy has really bad problems at home - he cuts school, he leaves at noon, he takes pills because he is hyperactive and the pills keep him quiet. One time he didn't take the pills and he just went wild. He's in that special E.H. class.

Robert: I have this friend who likes to fight all the time - he's always encouraging a fight - he's in one of those dummy classes.

Dan: Everyone knows the pyros on campus. Every time there is a fire they run over to the fire cheering, clapping and rubbing their hands together. And you just know this group did it. They brag about it afterwards.

#: Stupid pyros!

The dummy class, on the other hand, seems to have internalized the stereotypic impression of them and act out the expectations. They use the personal pronoun when describing violence and vandalism. "Why did you come to this class? We're the dummy class. I'm dumb. That's why I'm here."

This group also confirmed all the reasons for indulging in violence and vandalism. The dummy group beats up on little kids because they have a hard time at school, they (the dummy group) don't like grades, they smoke pot, they extort, because they like to look big.

#: They set themselves up. They are crying out for something.

#: Everybody has to look big in front of somebody, everybody has their own ego.

#: They fight to show their friends how big they are.

#: We used to punch in windows just to see who could do it without getting hurt (fist balled, jabbing in the air).

The dummy group admits openly to fanning the heat of racial antagonism at Bayside. They admitted that they can start a race riot any time they pleased. The Black students confirm this behavior and further state that racial slurs and other forms of racial hate are expressed every day. The Black students explained last year's race riot at Bayside as a culmination of a long history of racial antagonism which was left unattended by the school.

The Black students see Bayside as a racist school with teachers who don't care. They felt hurt that when they were surrounded by hostile White students (and 20 policemen) that only one teacher was there to comfort them and talk to them. The racial lines are sharp and distinct at Bayside.

On the whole, there seems to be little excitement among any of the students about Bayside. The same joylessness so obvious among the teachers is reflected in the comments of the students.

Annette: I heard one of the teachers say right in front of me - "these Black kids are running around the school like they are wild" and that wasn't true - he said it just like I wasn't there. He's a racist.

Marilyn: There is racial tension here every day and it's not getting any better. I'm in the 9th grade and I've told my mother that I'm going to the high school in our neighborhood. I don't want to be bussed out here anymore. This place is too racist. I couldn't make it another year.

Analysis and Conclusions

The problem of violence and vandalism at Bayside Junior High School has a multidimensional base - as accurately (and sometimes inaccurately) perceived by all involved, i.e., teachers, students, and administrators. Several of the probable causes which surfaced through this study are:

a) changing nature of the community; i.e., more lower SES families, more single parent families whose values are in conflict with school

b) children with school problems have similar intensities of home problems - home precipitates the school problems

c) low-achievers are disproportionately represented in the trouble-making group

d) general societal orientation toward violence (via media especially) predisposses students to participate in violence and vandalism.

These probable causes have consistent agreement from all segments interviewed. There is less agreement on the following explanatory variables:

a) increase in teachers "not caring" has produced more student alienation expressed through vandalism

b) striving for good grades and other acceptable school achievements have been greatly replaced by peer group norms of deviant behavior

c) lack of severe, dramatic and consistent disciplinary measures (at the disposal of teachers and administrators) encouraged an increase in student deviant behavior

d) other students (peer group) set the tone and reinforce deviant behavior (vandalism)

e) increased hostility and agression toward teachers, school, finds an outlet in deviant behavior (vandalism.

In addition to these explanatory, causal relationships, there is general agreement that the problem continues to get worse, the problem is "caused" by a small (1-10%) percentage of students, some problems (arson, racial violence, for example) are seasonal and intrusion alarms greatly reduce breakins and vandalism.

It is highly probable that all of these factors do indeed have causal relationships. However, many of these processes are out of the reach of the school's influence. This brings into focus the timeless question of whether the school is completely passive and helpless; simply a reflection of general societal trends, or can the school exert strong, independent effects on violence and vandalism? The data in this study reveal a curious reaction to this issue. There is a deep conviction in all parties interviewed schools can exert strong independent effects on the behavior of children. This is encouraging and there is a strong social science base for such a belief. Schools and the people in them do represent a powerful socializing agent in the lives of children. One the other hand, the teachers, especially do not see opportunities for themselves as individuals to act on this belief.

The configuration of this important moral ingredient seems to be the most salient characteristic at Bayside. <u>There is little enthusiasm, viability, excitement (no school spirit, if you will), no zest in this school</u>. It is falling down in front of them (teachers, administrators and students) and everyone feels helpless to stop it.

Suggestions for improvement generally reflect this lack of spirit - they tend to focus on the first set of factors listed above. To relegate all or most of the causes to community factors stands in direct contradiction to their strongly held beliefs about the efficacy of the school.

The school is quite helpless in the face of changing community demographics.

However, the "school as a community" unto itself can insulate it's students against destructive or potentially destructive forces which invade the school community. The teachers seem to have lost the drive to operationalize the latter part of this conclusion.

Things and Processes

The strong reliance on things such as guard dogs, intrusion alarms, window grids, detection systems, to the exclusion of suggesting other changes may well reflect this loss of enthusiasm at Bayside. For instance, there is strong agreement that the opportunity tranfer program is not effective in deterring violence and vandalism, yet there are presently no explorations of alternatives. There is little interest in examining internal factors or processes which can be experimented with to deter school violence. There is the strong conviction that even though our community is changing, our children are changing, we (the school) will not change.

This insulation against change seems to speed up the downward thrust of Bayside. There is considerable pride (and justly so) in the physical facilities, but little expressed pride in the students, in Bayside's academic program, no special positive mention of the school's grading system, it's tracking system, it's referral system. It would appear that this attitude among teachers and administrators is an early warning sign of a continual down-grading of the overall climate of Bayside.

If allowed to persist, it seems probable that Bayside will very much resemble (in incidents) central city schools in a few years.

The evaluation system is repeatedly hinted as a source of problems in student morale. The students express considerable ambivalence about the grading system. In addition, the students, and some teachers, hold very strong opinions about the effects of the tracking system at Bayside. Grades and related achievement rewards have lost their efficacy as tools for influencing student behavior. This is another serious warning for Bayside. The evaluation system seems to exacerbate the problems of truancy, misbehavior, and ultimately, school vandalism.

The gross stereotyping that abounds among the students is partially related to tracking and school achievement. The upper division students, with their snobbish views of the E.H. kids and the dummy classes set up the mechanism and processes for the self-fulfilling prophesy to take place. The E.H. kids and lower ability kids conform to and reinforce their stereotypes. Teachers are not exempt from this process. This is evidenced by the widespread agreement over the percentage of youngsters involved in vandalism and other anti-social behaviors. The agreement is so uniform that many students and teachers would probably agree to the point of jointly naming the students who are trouble-makers.

There seems to be little empathy for these students. One can get caught in this position as a victim rather than a participant - which is the ultimate danger of stereotyping and self-fulfilling prophesies.

There is a "hard core" group of "troublemakers" who do not seem to represent any particular age group, ethnic group, or socio-economic group.

The school agrees on their profile: home problems, low-achievers, and most importantly, they are repeaters. Everyone knows them and explains them away with the double bind argument.

We are helpless in working against the home effects, family effect. This explaining way, rather than introspectively viewing the school's social and structural processes as causal elements seems dangerous in a school in Bayside's position.

Intimately related to all of the above generalizations are the ultimate lessons being taught to Bayside students. There is a strong element of belief among the lower section classes that they are dumb, they have low intelligence and they are the troublemakers. All of the behavioral manifestations of being trapped into this portion is evident in the dummy class interview. Conspicious in these interviews is the frequent use of the personal pronouns I, we. These students, though much is said for shock value, seem well disposed to internalizing the images of being dumb, pot-smoking, troublemakers.

Serious attention should be given to the stereotyping which seems to abound throughout the school.

Related to this is the peer structure at Bayside. Victims of stereotyping often rely on other similar victims for mutual support. Thus, dysfunctional peer group norms may become entrenched in the school culture.

There is peer pressure not to achieve (thus conforming to part of the stereotype), there is peer pressure to perform deviant acts, again conforming to the stereotype.

Many youngsters at Bayside may become caught up in this cycle and become imprisoned by their own inabilities to break through. The frustration and hostility resulting from being victims of stereotyping may motivate acts of vandalism (getting back at school) as much as home problems or a disorganized family life.

The Black students represent a case in point of the above. There is little reason to believe that 200 students have enough common interests to band together as one group. As a protective device against perceived racial hostility from Whites, the students "eat together every day". "These are the Black tables - everyone knows the Black students sit here"; "we decided to stick together", "anyone friendly with Whites, we call them Oreos, and we let them know we disapprove".

The difficult part of this process is that as the kids band together, they make themselves more visible, more open to stereotypic attacks (and physical attacks in the case of the Black students). The banning together in addition confirms the stereotypes "those cheerleaders are a snotty group - you see how they go around together and won't let anyone come into their group".

Whereas it is not feasible to limit the student's choices of friendship groups, it is incumbent upon the school to stop the stereotyping.

The private prisons in which some of the students must feel trapped can be expressed in many hostile ways; "teachers don't care about us", "fuck the pigs and the school", "this school has a lot of racist teachers".

Remedies?

There are probably few remedies that an outsider, unfamiliar with the long range on-going processes of the school can offer. However, collectively the persons interviewed do offer many areas which may suggest remedies.

The following items would seem promising to explore:

a) Many of the persons interviewed in this study rarely talk to each other; hampered by a large physical plant, isolation can quickly cut off faculty-faculty interaction, faculty-administration interaction, etc.

b) Present disciplinary procedures are viewed by teachers as being ineffective - an extensive analysis of such would seem in order.

c) Security agents are underutilized. They are anxious to expand their roles - new and inventive ways to involve them in the general educational program of the school would be most rewarding.

d) The evaluation system (grading), tracking and the general academic atmosphere needs revitalization. It is common agreement that these factors should be the focal point of these discussions or inquiries.

e) Student relationships (racial relations, especially) need to be seriously studied and impacted with exciting alternatives.

f) Concealment of disciplinary actions, in cases of vandalism and other acts, by the school administration results in serious misconceptions about effectiveness of such measures, morale of the teachers and develops an over-reaction to certain acts rather than an analytical calm approach to such. Concealment of the problem does not make it go away.

g) Counselor and vice principal roles need serious reconsideration - there is strong agreement that these two vital links to the disciplinary system are ineffective.

h) Structural-organizational impediments to healthy student-student and student-teacher relationships should be studied further. Because the physical plant is so large, it may be profitable to think of reorganizing the school into teams of mini-schools to encourage a feeling of smallness, intimacy, provide opportunities for teachers and students to dispell stereotypic images of each other.

i) Efforts should be underway to dispell the feeling among students and teachers that deviant, violent behavior is not harshly dealth with, that many such acts are tolerated.

j) New excitement (school spirit) should be infused into any of the above efforts.

Bayside, indeed, doesn't have as big a problem with violence and vandalism as central city schools do. However, all of the warning signs are present. The school, if not dramatically stopped with very powerful people interventions will continue to decline. Recruits into deviant student groups occur daily. There was head-nodding, smiling, and loud yells when a student in the dummy class stated:

"Since we're forced to come here to this school,
we'll just raise a little hell!"